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ABSTRACT

One of a series of 20 literary magazine profiles written to help faculty advisors wishing to start or improve their publication, this profile provides information on staffing and production of "Et Cetera," the magazine published by Clarkstown High School, New City, New York. The introduction describes the literary magazine contest (and criteria), which was sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English and from which the 20 magazines were chosen. The remainder of the profile--based on telephone interviews with the advisor, the contest entry form, and the two judges' evaluation sheets--discusses (1) the magazine format, including paper and typestyles; (2) selection and qualifications of the students on staff, as well as the role of the advisor in working with them; (3) methods used by staff for acquiring and evaluating student submissions; (4) sources of funding for the magazine, including fund raising activities if applicable, and production costs; and (5) changes and problems occurring during the advisor's tenure, and anticipated changes. The Spring 1984 issue of the magazine is appended. (HTH)

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AN EXEMPLARY HIGH SCHOOL LITERARY MAGAZINE: ET CETERA

Compiled by

Hilary Taylor Holbrook

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
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INTRODUCTION

In 1984, the National Council of Teachers of English began a national competition to recognize student literary magazines from senior high, junior high, and middle schools in the United States, Canada, and the Virgin Islands. Judges in the state competitions for student magazines were appointed by state leaders who coordinated the competition at the state level.

The student magazines were rated on the basis of their literary quality (imaginative use of language; appropriateness of metaphor, symbol, imagery; precise word choice; rhythm, flow of language), types of writing included (poetry, fiction, nonfiction, drama), quality of editing and proofreading, artwork and graphic design (layout, photography, illustrations, typography, paper stock, press work), and frontmatter and pagination (title page, table of contents, staff credits). Up to 10 points were also either added for unifying themes, cross-curricular involvement, or other special considerations, or subtracted in the case of a large percentage of outside professional and/or faculty involvement.

In the 1984 competition, 290 literary magazines received ratings of "Above average," 304 were rated "Excellent," and 44

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earned "Superior" ratings from state contest judges. On the basis of a second judging, 20 of the superior magazines received the competition's "Highest Award."

As a special project, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills has selected 20 magazines from those receiving "Superior" ratings to serve as models for other schools wishing to start or improve their own student literary magazines. The profiles of these magazines are based on the faculty advisor's contest entry sheet, the judges' evaluation sheets, and interviews with the faculty advisors. Where possible, the magazines themselves have been appended. Information for ordering copies of the magazines is contained at the end of each profile.

ET CETERA

Clarkstown High School North

New City, New York

Principal: Mr. Speranza

Faculty Advisor: Mrs. Mary Evansburg

1984 Student Editor: Karen Nickel

"As long as man has walked the earth, he has expressed himself through his art. Be it the crudity of a caveman's rock-scratchings or the splendor of Ruben's canvasses, man has always found an outlet for his creativity. Here at Clarkstown North, Et Cetera serves as our outlet. Upon these pages appears the finest our students have to offer."

--Karen Nickel, Student Editor--

Clarkstown High School North is a four-year public school in New City, a primarily white collar suburb of 38,000 residents north of New York City on the Hudson River. The school has been publishing Et Cetera, its art and literary magazine for over 25 years, as Mrs. Evansburg notes, "as a vehicle for the type of expression and personal writing, art, and photography that would not ordinarily be included" in the school newspaper and yearbook.

THE MAGAZINE FORMAT: ETC.

The 1984 issue of Et Cetera observes an interesting format by incorporating a variety of typefaces in the titles, including

Optima, Broadway Engraved, and calligraphy, so that each page (or in some instances, each entry) represents a self-contained visual design. Text is in 8 point Optima type, and authors are in 8 point Spartan medium Italic.

The magazine itself measures 11" x 8 1/2" wide, center stapled, and is printed on gray vellum paper with the cover in gray uncoated vellum cover stock. The wraparound cover illustration is a black and gray heron in flight, originally a watercolor by the student editor. Photographs illustrate the inside front and back covers, and occasionally these photographs cover the facing pages.

PRODUCTION: COMMITMENT

Et Cetera's staff of 28-30 is subdivided into different areas of production--literary, business, and layout, with some students serving in more than one area. In addition to the editor-in-chief, there are editors for art and photography, and managers for business, advertising, and fund-raising. The staff also appoints a student to handle public relations, and has a corresponding secretary and assistant. Mary Evansburg, who has been advisor for Et Cetera for three years, works as a consultant for the staff: students on the staff make the final decisions as to what goes into the magazine. The staff is "open to any dedicated CHSN student who is willing to commit himself."

The writing, artwork, and photography are all submitted by students. Working entirely after school hours, members of the staff complete 80 percent of the editing and proofreading, while faculty complete the remaining 20 percent of these tasks. Fifty

percent of the paste-up work is done by staff, and the remaining 50 percent is done out-of-house, as is all of the printing.

SUBMISSIONS: FIVE-POINT SCALE

The staff encourages students to submit writing and artwork by means of public address announcements, memos, and contests. On occasion, teachers will submit student work: many of the submissions are generated by course assignments. Effort is made to seek materials from all four grade levels and from the different academic tracks, although Mrs. Evansburg notes that a balance is not always possible.

Acceptance to the magazine is based upon a five-point marking system ranging from poor to superior. Each submission is read by twelve judges who grade it independently. Those pieces with the highest scores receive one final editorial review before acceptance.

Occasionally, a student work will have some problems but still show great potential for the magazine. The staff has a form letter stating interest in the work and asking for recommended changes. If the student wishes, staff members will work with him or her on the revision.

FUNDING: EVERYONE SELLS

The school district budget provides $1,800 for the magazine, and the staff must raise and additional $700, through the sale of past issues and student fundraising activities. Everyone on the staff is involved in fundraising activities, which include operating a concession stand at basketball games and at school plays, as well as selling cocoa tins. No advertising space is

sold in the magazine, but "Friends of Et Cetera" are listed in the back of the magazine for their assistance.

Et Cetera is produced at a cost $3.30 per copy for a print run of 400-500, and is sold to students for $2.50 each. Approximately 4% of the production expenses are recovered through sales.

CHANGES: STREAMLINING

The 1984 edition was the third issue for which Mrs. Evansburg worked as advisor. While she enjoys the participation of every interested student, Mrs. Evansburg acknowledges that a staff of 30 plus has become unwieldy--she has had up to ten students on the editorial staff alone. She plans to reduce the number of staff and streamline the organizational aspect of production.

Sales is another area in which Mrs. Evansburg anticipates changes. The 400-500 copy print run is economical from a printer's standpoint, but it is much higher than the number actually sold. She hopes to reorganize the sales staff and step up efforts to solicit orders and subscriptions, increasing the number of magazines sold.

For the present, Et Cetera will retain its alternative focus--publishing the kinds of works not included in the newspaper and yearbook--continuing to fill a very real student need. With changes in organizition and more efficient financing, the outlook for this already exciting and professional-looking magazine seems exceedingly bright.

**

Copies of Et Cetera may be obtained from

Clarkstown High School North

Congers Road

New City, New York 10956

Cost: $3.00 (includes postage)

ET CETERA

1984

photograph by Pamela Lyons

Karen A. Nickel
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Suzy Soffler, ART EDITOR
Pamela Lyons, PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR
David Geller, BUSINESS MANAGER
Charlene Flick, ADVERTISING MANAGER
Shantanu Saha, FUND-RAISING MANAGER
Raymond Lin, PUBLIC RELATIONS
Stephen S. Power, CORRESPONDING SECRETARY
Jennifer Collins, ASSISTANT

FACULTY ADVISOR
Mary Evansburg

LITERARY STAFF:
Erin Barrett
Stacy Bereck
James Carlson
Evelyn Daly
Michelle Denmark
Michael Douglas
Paul Fleischman
Lauren Flick
Susan Harfenist
Ellen Kwa
Julie Kwa
Heather McDermott
Jill Michaelsen
Sheila Morley
Bernadette Palumbo
Liz Scherr
Hilarie Spater
Rhonda Weinfeld
Peter Weingard

BUSINESS STAFF:
James Carlson
Evelyn Daly
Michelle Denmark
Michael Douglas
Paul Fleischman
Susan Harfenist
Jill Michaelsen
Bernadette Palumbo

LAYOUT STAFF:
Erin Barrett
Stacy Bereck
Julie Kwa
Sheila Morley
Liz Scherr

ET CETERA

Volume 26, Spring 1984

COLUMBIA SCHOLASTIC PRESS ASSOCIATION

Clarkstown High School North
Congers Road New City, NY 10956

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On the Nature of Art

Freedom and discipline, two seemingly contrasting qualities, comprise what we call art. Without freedom, art is little more than a mechanical exercise, holding no potential for deep meaning, no opportunity for originality; without discipline, art is an incoherent mash of emotions. The artist distinguishes himself by balancing these two factors; he uses art's inherent freedom as an opportunity for discipline, to paraphrase Toynbee, and thus achieves clarity of expression.

Et Cetera's cover represents this balance. In watercolor, I painted it with what artists call the free-est medium--free, for it lends itself to the most unrestrained effects. However, I harnessed its characteristic freedom for this sharp, disciplined result. Such is what the artists whose work appears herein strived for. They controlled the freedom of our English vocabulary for their fine poetry and prose, the freedom of the pencil for their fine drawings, the freedom of the camera for their fine photographs.

At the same time, the cover symbolizes every artist's desire to soar as majestically as this heron; to attain the beauty of accomplishment. To the novice, at first appearance flying seems frightening, but the potential artist knows he can never excel until he tries his wings. As James Joyce wrote in *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*, the artist's lot is "to live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life!" and then he too will soar as Daedelus, Fabulous Artificer. The artist must strive eternally!

As long as man has walked the earth, he has expressed himself through his art. Be it the crudity of a caveman's rock-scratchings or the splendor of Rubens' canvasses, man has always found an outlet for his creativity. Here at Clarkstown North, *Et Cetera* serves as our outlet. Upon these pages appears the finest our students have to offer.

Last year, as Editor, I marked the close of twenty-five years of *Et Cetera* with our silver anniversary issue. Herewith, again as Editor, I open our second quarter century, hoping it will be as rewarding as the first.

Karen A. Nickel

photograph by Karen A. Nickel

January 2nd

As I made my way home this afternoon,
shuffling through the muddied remainder
of a white Christmas,
a few timid snowflakes drifted down.
Soon they fell faster and more densely
and I rejoiced
as Heaven's pure white offering
enshrouded the dark slush.
Slowly then, the furiously falling snow
tapered off
until only a small number of flakes
flew to the earth
and then they disappeared as well.
I gazed thankfully about me
at the virginal sheet
hiding the dirtied snow when suddenly
I noticed the slush underneath soaking through,
escaping, destroying the purity of this new white world.
Helplessly I watched as it stealthily spread its darkness
until it rendered the new white snow
as itself, only darker this time.
My response was but a tear,
a tear almost invisible under the descending dusk.
I turned abruptly away
and resumed my walk
through the muddied snow
cursing my hope that this year could be different.
As the afternoon surrendered its light
to Night's sly darkness,
I trudged slowly home.

– Karen A. Nickel

Clouds Across the Stars

I wander in the silent jungle of loneliness
With my mind alone to guide me;
Armed but with the lack of emotion which holds me
In my solitary prison of existence.

– Stephen S. Power

sweet innocence

Rosey, pink cheeks
belonging to an air of angelic existence.
Wrapped in red velvet,
with her bow-like mouth
twisted
in the quintessential question of innocence.
With eyes more blue-black
in the darkest of nights
than in the light
when they are flakes dancing in macabre circles
against a Winter's sky.
As is the day.
Standing alone,
with the sticky, red and white striped stick
in her tiny, hot, pink hands.
Slowly savoring it.
Laughing.
Sharpening its end into a spiked glass-like point.
Taking her newly formed spear,
she pricks her plump, cherubic finger
and a slow drop of rich, crimson blood
sinks in to the whiteness of the freshly blanketed ground below
Melting a blood-red kiss upon it.
And with a final effort,
she plunges the soiled tip of her dagger
into the bloodied red heart of the snow.

Jasmine Blue

Secret Desires

The walls are here, but they are there as well
Covered with the conventions of beauty.
Projecting out, but not piercing within.

The dove is not here, but it is everywhere
The notions, of what is within, oppress.
The light falls slowly on the minds of men.

The desires are strong, yet can be broken—
In some, and in others it never will be.
Just there smoldering, waiting to be expressed.

Those than cannot break, move walls without, and—worlds within,
Stripped naked of fear, they are free to lay, in beauty without.

– David Lubell

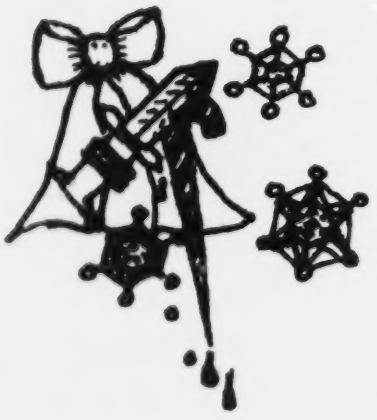

illustration by Evin Barrett

Prometheus, Matured a myth

He was a research chemist, with a PhD in biology, who did his job well. Endless hours labored he, but that did not bother him. "I must somehow repay society," he mused while bent over his microscope at 3 a.m. "To all the great men who have made my life possible and for this great government, I dedicate my work. I will cure cancer!" Day in, day out, night after endless, sleepless night he toiled. Never did he call in late. Not until he reached his goal would he consider relaxation. And he would reach his goal! He had to! No one knew why he spent those long hours in the lab. "If I fail, I will know I am unworthy to call myself 'scientist' as my accomplished predecessors have called themselves, but I do not wish the added burden of having others realize as well." He was dismissed as an eccentric. But he never recognized this opinion, for he simply, unendingly searched for the cure.

Then one day the doctor diagnosed his wife as having cancer. The prognosis was not good; now his will to discover the cure became more urgent. Three weeks passed when suddenly: "Yes, that is how it will work!" He laboured more furiously than before until finally, he developed a formula. It would cure any type of cancerous growth, malignant or benign, and, thought he, it was fail-safe.

Testing would prove superfluous; he knew it worked. He began administering the treatment to his wife who gratefully endured the daily injections. Then two months later, during one of her bi-weekly examinations, her doctor perplexedly proclaimed her cured.

"He's done it! I knew it would work!" cried she.

"Who's done it? And done what?" demanded the doctor.

"Oh, my husband has been treating the cancer with his cure these past two months."

"He WHAT?"

That day he found himself in jail. "But what have I done wrong?"

"God damn, man, where are your ethics? How could you make your wife a human guinea pig? That kind of testing is against the law."

"But she wasn't a guinea pig—I knew it would work, and it did."

"Tell it to the judge. In the meantime, your wife posted bail. You can go home but be here tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. for a hearing."

The judge was a hoary bearded man who glared like an eagle. "I'll grant leniency if you plead guilty. See, there's no need for a long, drawn-out trial."

"But I'm not guilty. I've hurt no one."

"If that's your attitude, I'll see you get 10 years! We can't have you scientists test out your potions on whomever you want." The judge punctuated his threat with a particularly penetrating glare.

As foretold, it was an open-and-shut case. Seven years was the sentence, but parole was possible in three year's time.

In rendering the sentence, the judge took time to remark on the alleged achievement of finding an alleged cure for cancer. "It's a good thing you've done for us—if it works, that is. Anyway, the government has decided, magnanimously, to test your formula while you serve this term."

"I'm afraid that's quite impossible," was his response.

"What do you mean 'impossible'? If you don't hand over your information, I'll pick it up from the lab myself," said the judge indignantly.

"That won't do you any good."

"And why not? I'd like to know!"

"I burned it."

– Karen A. Nickel

illustration by Karen A. Nickel

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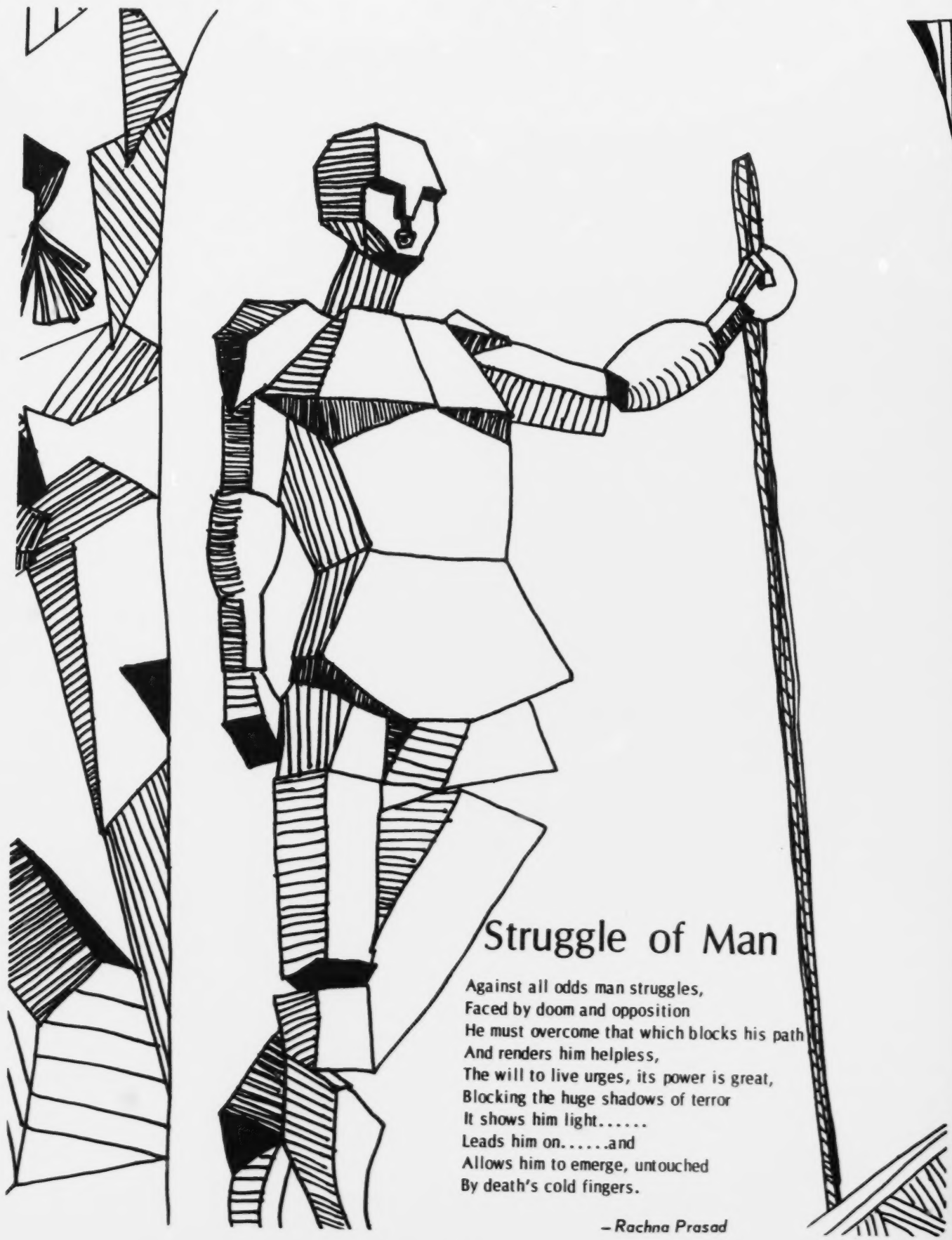


Struggle of Man

Against all odds man struggles,
Faced by doom and opposition
He must overcome that which blocks his path
And renders him helpless,
The will to live urges, its power is great,
Blocking the huge shadows of terror
It shows him light.....
Leads him on.....and
Allows him to emerge, untouched
By death's cold fingers.

– Rachna Prasad

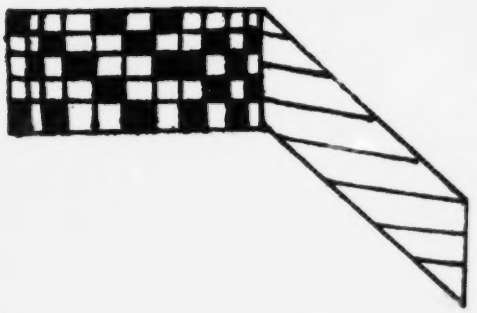
Another Day,

Blackness pervades the air
The wind howls
Birds still asleep

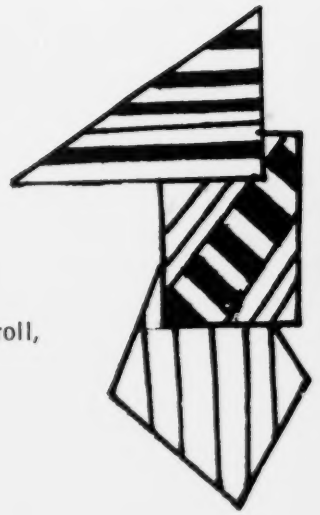
I drag my body into the darkened station
Eyes burn, body sags,
Sunlight appears as do cars,
One here, one there.

The hours press on
The day progressing in slow motion
Car after Car, filled
Three o'clock arrives, money is counted
I'm outa' here
No hurry
I'll be back tomorrow.

– William McKiegan



Bicycle



My self image
Is tied up in gears.
Wheels.
If I can make the wheels roll,
I can make myself.
Pushing the pedals,
I fuel my hope.
Dream my dreams.
I find me
Through sweat
And pain.

Matter is mind.
Muscles straining
Against hills
Bracing
Around turns.
I am my machine.
When it falls,
I get hurt.
When it coasts,
I get the breeze on my face.
In a higher gear
It is I who must face the challenge.

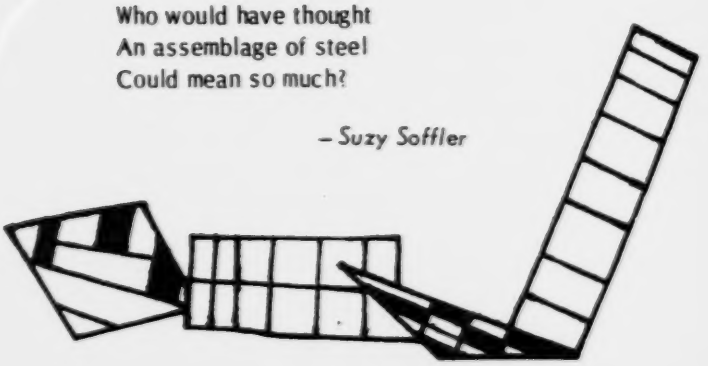
Who would have thought
An assemblage of steel
Could mean so much?

– Suzy Soffler

Bathtub Reflections

Sitting here in my tub.
Bathing in my loneliness
Splashing cool self-pity,
All over me.
Washing clean with my sympathy,
Bubbles of sorrow that never pop.
Stepping out so carefully,
Sitting on the edge,
Wrapping myself in soft assurance
And then out into the cold hall.

Jennifer Collins



illustrations by Pamela Lyons

JUST AN AVERAGE GUY

Fall. Early fall. The leaves were beginning to die and John DeMerico's contentment with life would soon be dying with them. Unfortunately, the death of his complacency would be nowhere as colorful as the scarlet demise of the leaves. John, had he known, might not have been upset by the idea of being upstaged by a few dead leaves.

However, it was a Sunday afternoon in early fall. John, at the moment, was more interested in the outcome of the football game he was watching than with any obscure foray into the meaning of his life. He was relaxing in front of the television set, a comfortable man in a comfortable chair. An inoffensive mongrel dog named Spot lay curled at John's feet, and sighed contentedly in his sleep every once in a while.

John gazed at the screen bemusedly, thinking of how far football had strayed from its origins. His foster father, on the rare occasions they had spoken, had explained how football used to be. John had been more than a little amazed to discover that whole teams of men had all had the same extraordinary gift for playing. Of course, that had been before the government instated its policy which allowed each person one outstanding talent and no more. Since that meant there was only one man with any semblance of talent in the game, this man had shrewdly become a free agent and any team he was on automatically won. It was just a matter of guessing for which team he was playing.

In a few minutes, it was obvious that one team was destroying the other, albeit completely through the efforts of one person. John no longer saw the point in watching and began to flip channels aimlessly. As he did so, he tried to recall exactly when the policy had been put into effect. He had been four at the time, so it had to be about a quarter of a century ago, more or less.

As far back as he could remember, John had been average. He had gone through grammar school, high school, and college with his blandness unblemished by any distinguishing features. Upon leaving his nondescript college, he had entered a nondescript insurance firm. At times, it was hard for him to feel sure of his purpose there because the company was so large. Sometimes he felt as if no one knew his name...

Well, that wasn't completely true, John admitted. As a matter of fact, his name was the one thing people did tend to remember about him. It would be very easy to dismiss such a plain looking man, a man of brown hair, blue eyes, medium height and medium build. However, his incongruous, ethnic last name made people stop and take notice. John DeMerico himself found his name puzzling, as his features were so plain that there seemed to be no ethnic group he could possibly belong to. He was also mystified because practically all others had names reflecting their superlative talents. It was part of the program. In a way, he supposed it was a throwback to the early days of the country, when if you met a man named Cooper you automatically knew he made barrels for a living.

A slight frown creased John's forehead as he mused, the television forgotten. It was reasonable to assume that they'd forgotten to change his name from DeMerico to something indicative of his talent. What suddenly occurred to him was so troubling that he hardly wanted to think of it.

Suppose...

Suppose he didn't *have* a superlative talent?

That, of course, was ridiculous. Everyone, even his taciturn foster father, had been given one major talent. He recalled his father's great amusement at being given the dubious distinction of Most Secretive. But while it was not a talent that John himself would have enjoyed having, at

illustration by Pamela Lyons

this point he would have been glad to be sure he possessed any talent at all.

John snapped off the television with an irritated click. Spot started, awoke, and looked at John with reproachful eyes. John didn't notice. Several disquieting thoughts began crowding to the front of his mind all at once, like pushy commuters on a subway platform. The question surfaced again: suppose he didn't have a superlative talent?

Such an oversight could have been an accident, John decided. Permanent records were kept in the Town Hall, and everyone's specific talent was marked on his file. Checking what his talent was should be no problem...

assuming you truly have one, John.

The thought rose in his mind before he could push it away. Savagely, he pushed himself out of his armchair and stood by the window. He stood there a long time, watching the dead leaves swirl through the cold, indifferent street.

* * * * * * * * * * *

"Excuse me?" the desk secretary inquired in the nasal, imperious tone of voice reserved for losers, pushovers, and milksops. That was exactly how she had sized up the soft-spoken fellow at her desk, and the casual observer almost certainly would have agreed with her. The man cleared his throat and spoke again.

"I said, I would like to have access to my file, please."

"What exactly did you say your name was, *sir*?" asked the secretary, her vocal inflections suggesting that there was lint on his suit.

"DeMerico. John DeMerico," the man replied. Small pearls of sweat glistened on his upper lip, and for the hundredth time, he wondered if this was worthwhile. There was no guarantee that he would discover that he had a talent at all. Why, then, was he here in his best suit, accepting abuse from a nasty Town Hall secretary? "Because anything," John thought, "is better than not knowing. Anything." It had taken John two anxiety-filled days to reach that conclusion.

"Just a minute, Mr. DeMerico, and I'll see what can be done." She left, trailing scorn behind her like a noxious perfume. Five minutes crawled by, then ten, then twenty. When the secretary came back, she looked sourly pleased.

"I'm sorry, Mr. DeMerico, but your file is classified. You don't have the authority to see it, nor are we..." she trailed off. John DeMerico's lower jaw hung down for just a moment before he shut it with a snap. John DeMerico, average loser, pushover and milksop, advanced on her so suddenly that she cringed back in surprise, hands shielding her face.

"The authority! The *authority*! What do you mean, I don't have the authority? Those files are open, O-P-E-N, do you hear me, OPEN! And it's my file! Don't tell me I don't have the authority!" To this the secretary made no reply, save the pressing of the small white emergency button on her desk. It was a matter of seconds until two burly guards appeared and clamped each of his arms.

"Come with us, sir. You're creating a scene," said the first one, trying to steer him toward a door on their left. John refused to be steered. He wrenched around viciously in their grasp.

"Under what policy are you denying the access to my files?" John shouted furiously. "I have the right to know!" A small, worried-looking crowd was beginning to form. The second guard grew exasperated.

"Whyn't ya shut your mouth, buddy, and let's move. Ya can't harass us 'cause ya ain't ranked high enough to see ya files."

"*I've* been the one har...not ranked high enough? Not ranked *high* enough!" John's voice rose in a crescendo of disbelief. "The entire point of your files *and* your program is to insure that everyone is equal, and *I'm* not ranked high enough to *see* them? You can't do this!" John raged.

"What exactly did you say your name was, Sir?" asked the secretary, her vocal inflection suggesting that there was lint on his suit.

"Don't count on it, buddy," said the second guard. John was led, ranting, through the door on the left, where a syringe was inserted in his arm.

John awoke to the astringent smell of rubbing alcohol, his first clue to his location. He sat up slowly, and childishly rubbed his eyes. His first impression had been correct—he was in the Town Hall infirmary.

He squinted in the harsh light of the fluorescents. In

illustration by Suzy Soffler

the other cot, he could see the starkly outlined form of a young man. He looked maybe eighteen, and had a bandage over a large and ugly bruise swollen over his left eye. A doctor was seated imposingly behind a large desk in the front. John collected his thoughts and walked over to the doctor.

"What am I doing here?" John inquired conversationally. The doctor looked at him with amused superiority. John hated him.

"I might ask that of you, Mr. DeMerico. You were being quite unreasonable before." John silently counted to ten and refused to let himself be drawn into that argument again. "It became necessary to give you a sedative."

"I'd like to see someone in charge. Someone who can tell me why everyone is allowed to see their files but me."

"I'm sorry, Mr. DeMerico, but that's impossible at this point in time. You must realize that we can't handle all these requests we get to see 'someone in charge.' Believe me, you truly aren't unique in this matter." The doctor's eyes gleamed. "You would be well advised to rest awhile."

John saw there was no point in talking any longer, and went back to his cot. His roommate, the huddled lump, began to stir and moan.

"Oh-h-h, God, what a night!" he groaned, stretching and wincing with pain when his hand brushed his brow. He looked over, saw John DeMerico, and a wry, sleepy grin lit his face momentarily.

"Well, well. Whatcha in for buddy?" he demanded.

"I don't know," John said. His tongue suddenly felt fuzzy. "They said I was creating a disturbance."

"In that case, glad to meet you. My name's Cain. Cain Perception, as a matter of fact. The government pulled a swift one when they named me. I'm in here for voicing my political opinions a little too loudly to the wrong person, that's all. But, what the hell. Gotta call 'em as I sees 'em, don't I?" John nodded dumbly. Cain smiled again.

"Come on, you can do better than that. What did you say your name was?"

"John. John DeMerico. Pleased to meet you." He extended his hand and Cain pumped it heartily.

"Well, I'm happy to meet you too, John-boy. You're lucky. Very few people have had the pleasure of sharing an infirmary room with me. Let's get to know each other." This time it was John who smiled.

"For starters, what's your unique talent?" Cain asked, and John's smile faded as quickly as it had appeared. That's a good question, Cain, he thought, and if I knew the answer in the first place, I probably wouldn't be here.

"Something wrong, John? You look a little white around the gills," Cain said. Something that might have been a concerned frown wrinkled underneath his bandage.

"I don't know what my talent is," John croaked, his throat dry. Cain sat up straight and stared at him. John felt oddly ashamed.

"You mean, you *really* don't know what your special talent is? You couldn't figure it out from your last *name*?" asked Cain unbelievingly. John shook his head, feeling foolish.

"Look." Cain grabbed a pen and a paper towel. "A lot of names, like mine, don't give you all that much trouble in figuring them out. A couple, though, make you think a little. They don't spell it right out for you, so to speak. In AP Government Policies, we were told that those names are usually acronyms or something. You honestly never knew that?" John shook his head again.

"Your name's sort of interesting, but it doesn't look like an acronym to me." Cain's bandaged brow clouded, then cleared. "I think it's one of those things where the right letters are all there, they're just scrambled. You know, like those Junior Jumble things in the paper? I love doing those—that is, I, uh, did," he added hastily. John gave him a wan smile.

"Now, let's see what we got here," Cain mumbled, going to work with his pen. "D-E-M-E. . ." His face furrowed in concentration. Suddenly, it smoothed.

"I think I got it, Johnny-boy," he announced. "But I'm not sure. Don't you have any idea what your talent is?"

"None," John confessed. "I was never sure I really had one, and they're not letting me look it up in my files."

"This should be right, then," Cain said. "Take a look."

The eight letter word on the paper towel hit him like a bullet to the heart. John wondered why he'd never thought of it before, being a man of average intelligence, and then hated himself for thinking that. The word stared up at him, an accusation, a prophesy:

MEDIOCRE

All John's life rose up behind him in a gray wave. It seemed he had always sensed it was his destiny to be mediocre, no more than average. It seemed far too cruel to

be anything but a joke. And that's exactly what this is, John realized: a colossal joke played at my expense by the government. Ha-ha, very funny.

Cain had turned away, leaving John to deal with the situation by himself. John took several deep breaths and tried to think clearly.

Was it so terrible to be average? From another's point of view, John reflected, it might not be. But for him, knowing no matter what he did it would always be just AVERAGE and no better, it was indeed terrible.

More terrible, though, was the impotent rage he felt. They had decreed when he was four that it was his fate to be average, and now they were punishing him for fulfilling their expectations so well. John felt a sudden, hateful envy for Cain, who would never have to bear the almost laughable cross of being mediocre all his life.

An idea rose in John's mind, deep and black as creek water in winter. There was nothing forcing him to spend the rest of his life being mediocre. Not anymore. Not with the medicine cabinet right there and the doctor on a coffee break.

The Veronal proved very easy to find once he had forced the lock on the cabinet. He lay on his cot and swallowed ten grains in five measured gulps. John's departure from this world was as average as anyone could have wished. It was not even marred by Cain stirring in the next bed, although Cain had witnessed the entire scene.

When Cain was sure that John was no longer alive, he sighed. "Way to go, Johnny-boy," he said softly as he turned his face to the wall. "I guess you showed them at last, huh," He slept, but not before one lone tear had soaked sadly into his bandage.

• • • • • • • • • • •

Fall. Late fall, some five years after John DeMerico had taken his own life in an anonymous little infirmary. The last leaves had turned brown and fallen, many of them around the inconspicuous marble marker in an obscure corner of the grounds. Yet in no way did they obscure the chiseled epitaph:

HERE LIES JOHN DEMERICO

1996 - 2029

HE SHARED THE AVERAGE MAN'S DESIRE

TO BE SOMEWHAT MORE THAN AVERAGE

• • • • • • • • • • •

– Denise Duggan

photograph by Pamela Lyons

The Year I Missed October

Yes, it was a good season,
With leaves in shades of gold.
In red and orange hue,
They covered the trees.
As each day passed,
And added more color,
Bit by bit,
The artist
Completed the masterpiece.
Nature
Had painted a portrait,
With oil paints of sapphire
And gold,
On the infinite canvas.
But I was unaware.
I was seeking a future
In faraway places,
And searching for
the Answers.
I did not see the days
Slipping by.
The painting neared completion;
I had lost the autumn.
It had washed away
Like watercolors.
Today I tried to
Grasp the moments,
Capture the missing days.
I stole my afternoon
(Which did not belong to me,
But to a
Higher judge)
And I searched for my lost
Season
The weeks consumed
By trivial journeys.
I found a
Fading picture,
A yellowed photograph.
The leaves have fallen.
I am afraid
That I have
Missed October
Again.

– Karen Droga

Sun

The red glowing sphere
bursts from the dark horizon
while its brilliance spreads.

– Eileen Fee

illustrations by Liz Scherr

The Storm on the Pond

The still pond, undisturbed by a single ripple, mirrored the vegetation along its banks. The sky above, however, was not motionless, but slipping into an overcast dress. From the sky, a tiny droplet fell, breaking the silence of the water with a soft splash. From this came a series of dull circles enlarging as they moved further away from the source. The droplet was followed by others which patterned the pond with their effect. Gentle waves greeted the raindrops as they became more numerous. The sky, growing impatient, roared in a loud, thunderous voice and shot an army of liquid bullets into the deep blue pond. Angry waves resulted and slapped at the muddy banks. The pond remained in its rough, disgruntled mood until the clouds retreated.

– Sandy Tarasoff

Storm

I can hear
The boom of thunder filling the air,
The crackling of fire when lightning hits,
The scurrying of animals breaking twigs
in their flight,
Trees crashing to their death.

– Sharon Krivitzky

The Bird Cage

Mrs. Reuben stood by the window staring out into the cool autumn evening. "How many times have I stood here?" she wondered. Watching the children play or just surveying the scene of her beautifully tended suburban lawn. Her face was a sensitive face of aging beauty. Her high cheek bones and large green eyes had withstood the effects of time, but a creased forehead and several wrinkles gave away her age. Her ivory skin had become tight and leathery as a result of her year-long tan. She wore a maroon crew neck sweater over a subdued pink blouse. Her trousers were also maroon and were carefully pressed. She sighed wistfully and brushed a stray hair off her forehead.

"Mother?" Lisa Reuben entered the room. Her mother looked odd, older than usual. It scared Lisa to see the woman gazing out the window. She looked lonely and unhappy, not at all like self-assured Mrs. Reuben.

"Yes, Lisa," Mrs. Reuben turned around and forced a smile. Her eyes became bright and her usual expression returned. Lisa breathed with relief.

"I just came to talk," Lisa said. "I can't believe I'm leaving tomorrow."

"Neither can I," her mother replied, noticing how old Lisa looked. When had it happened? The planes of her face had lost that soft, little-girl look. They had become sharper, longer. Her hair was cut short in a pixie cut that showed to her advantage the high cheek bones she had inherited from her mother. Her eyes had retained the same look they always had. Brown, starry eyes with tiny flecks of yellow. Eyes that seemed to look above and beyond, never directly at you. It had scared her mother when Lisa was little, and when Lisa was three months old her mother had brought her to a doctor to find out if Lisa was blind. She was not. Her mother had always been slightly afraid of her first born. Lisa had always seemed aloof and wiser than her mother. They didn't share the close bond of companionship that Mrs. Reuben shared with her younger daughter.

The two women stood in silence.

"College already," said Mrs. Reuben with a nervous laugh. "When I was in college I was sure I knew everything there was to know about the world. I was very naive, then."

"How naive was Lisa?" she wondered to herself. She seemed fairly innocent but how was Mrs. Reuben to know. She didn't even know if Lisa was a virgin. She doubted it. Lisa had been seeing the same boy since the summer of her senior year. It was her first boyfriend, and they were constantly together. Mrs. Reuben liked Paul well enough, but she disliked the twinges of jealousy she had when the couple was together. Lisa looked so bubbly and the two were always laughing with secret inside jokes. Mrs. Reuben felt as if Paul knew Lisa better than she did. Made Lisa happier than she ever had. Inside she was grateful that Paul was going to college in the midwest. That would mean a separation and Lisa might meet someone new. She wanted Lisa to meet many boys and to understand herself before she married. Not rush into marriage as she had. She loved her husband well enough, but there was a bitterness that they shared, an unspoken accusation that stemmed from an early marriage. Before they knew it Howard was successful, and then the children came. And one night they were lying in bed when she realized Howard was not the man she had married. Nor was she the girl he had married. But they were both too comfortable for a divorce and she wanted the children to lead a normal life. Now Lisa was going to college. A part of Mrs. Reuben was breaking off.

"I feel funny about leaving, mother," Lisa burst out. "Not scared but—uneasy. I can't explain it." She broke off. Why was she saying this? For the past four years she had wanted to leave. Wanted to leave the neat, orderly, sprawling ranch she called home. Wanted to leave a disapproving mother and an indifferent father. At times she felt as if her best friend was the blue parrakeet named Gilda which sat looking fat and dignified in the kitchen. Mrs. Reuben had bought it when Lisa was twelve because Lisa had begged her for it and because it matched the wallpaper. Oftentimes Lisa would go downstairs and sneak it up to her room when her mother wasn't home. She would pretend that Gilda was God and told the bird all of her problems. She imagined that the bird would make them all go away. One day her younger sister Jenny had caught her and threatened to tell Mother. Lisa had to bribe her with candy not to tell. What would Mother think if she found out that her oldest daughter talked to birds?

But now Lisa was older and even though she wanted to leave she wanted her mother to say something. She wanted her mother to tell her that she would write every day, that she'd call, that she'd miss her.

"What do you mean, honey?" Mrs. Reuben asked. Lisa shrugged. "You shouldn't feel uneasy," her mother began. "These will be the best four years of your life, wait and see." Silence fell. "Would you like a cup of coffee?" Mrs. Reuben asked Lisa. Lisa nodded. "I just bought a new brand," said Mrs. Reuben as they walked into the kitchen. "It's from the food emporium. I bought a pound of fresh beans. You'll love it."

Lisa nodded and went over to the bird. Gilda pecked curiously at Lisa's finger, then toddled away, disinterested. "I saw Mrs. Martins the other day and I told her you were going away to college. She just couldn't believe it. She said that you were one of the best students that she ever had. If she only knew what..."

"Mother, did you know that I used to talk to Gilda?"

Mrs. Reuben looked up, surprised.

"What did you say, honey?" she asked.

"I said I used to talk to Gilda."

"What do you mean?" Her eyebrows went up.

"I used to tell the bird my problems. I thought she had the power to make them go away." Lisa sat staring at the bird.

"What problems?" asked Mrs. Reuben. Her forehead crinkled with worry.

"Oh, nothing important. Little girl things. It was dumb." Lisa looked away.

"I don't want any coffee," Lisa said. "I'm tired, I think I'll go upstairs."

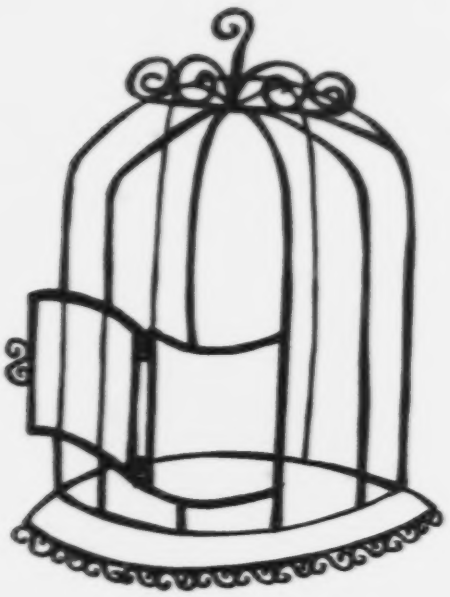


illustration by Suzy Soffler

Mrs. Reuben's face dropped. "Oh, but Lisa, I wanted you to try this," she said.

"Tomorrow, mother, I promise, before I leave."

"All right." Mrs. Reuben walked over and kissed her daughter on the forehead. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Mother."

Mrs. Reuben sat in the kitchen for the next hour absentmindedly drinking coffee. Her daughter talking to birds? All those years of growing up—of course she must have had problems. But instead of talking to her mother Lisa had been talking to a bird. All of a sudden her chest ached. She looked at the bird with hatred. The bird caught her gaze and held it. To Mrs. Reuben the bird looked evil, spiteful. It blinked and turned away.

Mrs. Reuben picked the cage off the wall and carried it outside. She opened the tiny door and prodded the bird out. She wobbled cautiously and sniffed at the breeze. She looked at Mrs. Reuben curiously, then flapped her wings. She didn't go far, maybe a few feet. But she kept flying, then looking back, then flying until she was several yards away. Then she spread her wings and disappeared into the branches of a nearby tree. Mrs. Reuben went back inside.

In the morning the family looked in astonishment at the empty cage. Jenny started to cry as Mr. Reuben shook his head in wonder.

"The door must have been open and she must have flown out the window," said Mrs. Reuben. Lisa just sat staring at her coffee. After breakfast Mr. Reuben left to make hotel arrangements so they could drop Lisa off at college. Jenny went upstairs.

Mother and daughter were left sitting at the table.

"Lisa," Mrs. Reuben said slowly. "Lisa, have I been a good mother?" Her voice cracked.

"Why, mother, how can you ask that?" Lisa looked astonished.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Reuben, wiping her eyes. "I haven't been mean to you or made you unhappy, have I?"

"Of course not, mother," Lisa replied. "You know that."

"I don't. I don't know. You're my daughter and I don't know.

Lisa's mother looked hurt and vulnerable.

"Honey, I didn't mean to let you down. You're my daughter. And—I love you. I love you so much."

She burst into tears. Lisa went to hug her and spilled coffee all over the spotless white floor. But on a warm autumn morning, mother and daughter sat hugging each other over the table and crying. Above their heads swung the empty cage.

– Beth Schroeder

Saturday, 11:03pm

"CHT!" the sound of another bottle opening.

"Hey!...you shouldn't do that!" is that me speaking? "That is too much!" then he laughs and I laugh. I laugh sillily but I really don't have to laugh that way. I mean if I didn't want to laugh that way I wouldn't have to but why am I still laughing that way when I don't have to? Because I just feel like it that's all I can act normal if I want to it's just that...

"Here, drink up!"

See, you, watch me, I'll refuse this in a normal fashion that will not be silly it will be normal instead. All right now, yes, I'll make my face determined and look at him in the eye ("make eye contact") and begin to speak ("speak clearly"),

"No thank you!" but all he does is laugh: hey, I thought that I was acting properly did it not work or something? I laugh in that silly pseudo intoxicated manner again but is it really pseudo? Oh, forget about it everything is funny anyway.

These guys are sitting here laughing, this guy's lying on the floor, these guys are singing songs, this guy's staring into space...

"wodameniafoer!!!!!!!" some gibberish but it is loud but who really cares since everybody is loud now.

"you're purple!" oh no am I really.

"Oh no am I really?" my head is hollow and some voice is speaking but is it me speaking of course it is stop with the exaggeration it's just that it sounds different that's all.

I walk fine. I walk to the mirror. Fine.

"Oh my God! I am purple! What a joke!" you know, you look pretty bad like some kind of sunburned monster or something. That's not very good.

Surge. Surge. Surge. Surge. Blood in my head that's why it's red! I have a growing headache.

Maybe this was a mistake.

"CHT!" the sound of...

– Raymond Lin

photograph by Raymond Lin

Changing Tides

It has been several months—or is it years—everything seems on the surface to be the same, like I wanted it to be, but it isn't really. Many storms and high tides have changed and shifted the place of many memories. But is it really just the tide or also me—maybe it looks different because I am different.

The same things no longer seem fascinating—where are those things that once kept me so happy and content? The sea is stormy today. I can't find what I came here looking for—maybe I just can't see them or else the restless tide has covered them for the moment. But I don't think I would find them, even if I looked underneath. Maybe whatever is hidden isn't under a salty blanket, but in my own salty mind, buried beneath the many restless changes in my own life. I'm trying to find something that just might not be here although its presence seems so close I can almost smell it in the wind and taste its bitterness on my tongue. Is everyone searching in their own ways for what I'm looking for—something so precious and dear, but painful to look upon—please tell me where it is and what it is before I slowly go out of my mind.

– Jennifer Collins

... reflections

My hand slowly rose to myself, fingers outstretched. Silently, it felt toward itself, but it could only feel the cold glass which reflected ice blue eyes, shrouded in tears, the doorway to my mind. Through this door I tried to grasp myself, my emotions, my thoughts, my loneliness, but there would always be a barrier between.

You can only look through a window, never cross it.

Stephen S. Power

Best Friends

Everyone warned us, but we wouldn't listen. We refused to believe that anything could ever break up our friendship. We were so excited, finally off to college where my best friend, Lisa, and I would be rooming together. We'd be able to talk for as long as we wanted, without any family member yelling for us to get off the phone. We thought that rooming together could only make us closer, like sisters. If only we'd listened, it never would have happened...

I staggered into my new room, arms filled with boxes. My parents followed, dragging in the rest of my luggage I looked around the very cluttered room, trying to figure out how two people were supposed to live with about a square foot of empty floor space. The rest of the room was taken up by two beds, two desks and chairs, two dressers, and the toaster oven my father had just brought in for Lisa and I to share.

I heard a low moan as Lisa stumbled into the room, let out a sigh as she dropped a huge box on a bed. She smiled at me, and then quickly scanned the room, also puzzled about the amount of space we had to work with. "We'll rearrange the furniture," she said decisively, "then we will have more space—I guess."

That was Lisa for you. Always taking control of situations while I followed her sometimes zany orders. It used to get us into trouble all the time, especially with our parents and teachers. They would say that they couldn't understand how two people so different could be such close friends. Not only were we different physically (Lisa was short and constantly on a diet, had curly black hair and brown eyes; I was tall, skinny, with straight brown hair and blue eyes), but our personalities were opposites. She was always confident; very sure of herself. Lisa did what she wanted, no matter what anyone thought of her. I, on the other hand, have always been shy. Maybe that is why Lisa and I were such good friends—she could be as nutty as she wanted and I followed. I always had someone to hide behind in unfamiliar situations.

Lisa and I unpacked and made our room more comfortable. We even rearranged the furniture and we did have more room to move around in. We got into a comfortable routine; classes, homework, socializing, and occasional parties. We made a lot of new friends—some friendships stuck, a few didn't. Lisa and I were closer than ever. We would sit for hours together, talking. She was like my sister.

But even sisters argue once in a while. Lisa still tried to take control of everything and often, I still let her. However, I was beginning to resent it a little. I was, after all, in college. There were no parents to oversee me, or tell me what to do. I was enjoying learning to stand on my own. But the more I wanted to do things for myself, the more upset Lisa seemed. I guess in a way, she felt I was leaving her behind, that I didn't need her anymore. I didn't realize this then, though. I only saw her becoming more and more impossible. She complained that I was too messy. I knew she was right, but it was a habit that was difficult to break.

One day, I came into the room at about 2:30 in the morning, I was exhausted and wanted to climb into bed and go to sleep. Looking around the room, I noticed that it was much neater than it had been a little while ago. Then I looked at my bed.

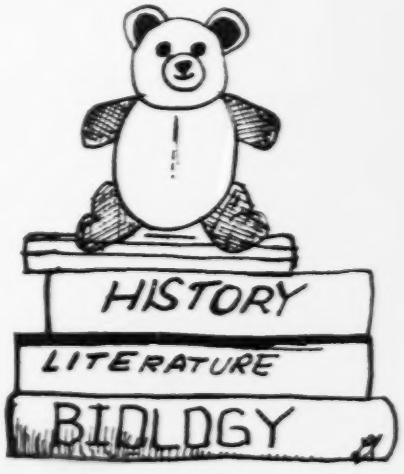


illustration by Liz Scherr

Piled on top of it was everything of mine that had been lying around the room instead of being put away, as it should have. Books, stuffed animals, letters to and from my friends, a poster that had fallen down, even some clothing of mine that had somehow found its way into Lisa's draws or closet, all neatly stacked on my bed. I turned on the light and loudly began putting things away.

Lisa, who had been asleep until I woke her up with all my clatter, shot me a disapproving look. "Pam, would you please hurry up. I want to sleep." I closed my eyes and counted to ten. Then, I picked up what was left on my bed, and threw it on the floor. "Finished!" I said brightly, turning off the light again and climbing into bed.

"Pamela," she said icily, "I don't like living in a pigsty." I promised I would clean it up in the morning. "Just let me get some sleep," I begged. "I have an 8:00 class tomorrow morning," she said. "I asked you not to come in late and wake me up. Even though you don't have to wake until 9:30 in the morning, other people do have to get up earlier...." "Lisa," I interrupted, "don't tell me what to do. I do have a mind of my own, you know. I wish you would just stop trying to take control of my life." There, I'd said it. But I hadn't meant for it to come out so angrily. I didn't have to look at Lisa to see the hurt in her eyes. I could imagine it quite clearly, and I felt so guilty. But it had to be done sooner or later.

In the morning, I offered peace by putting the things on the floor away. Lisa smiled weakly and began to help me. I suddenly let out a small cry. "My red blouse. Where was it? I've been looking for it for weeks. I haven't worn it, but *look* at it!" Lisa cleared her throat and stared at the stained blouse I was holding. "Um, I sort of borrowed it, Pam. I was wearing it while I was up late, studying and I spilled coffee on it. I – I sent it to the cleaners, but the stain wouldn't come out. Look, I'll buy you a new one, ok?"

"You *borrowed* it? Did you ask me? No. You are supposed to be so neat? You spilled coffee on it? Lisa, all you had to do was ask me. Is that so much to ask of you?"

"Of me? You are the one who keeps lending all of your friends *our* toaster oven. It is partly mine, you know. I wanted to make something to eat several times, but the toaster oven is never there!"

I glared at her and stalked out of the room, declaring that I "had to study." "There you go again, always walking out on an argument. You know I'm right, Pam. You just can't admit you might be wrong for once." Ignoring her, I walked to the lounge to find some friends to talk to.

After lunch, I went back to the room. Lisa was sitting on her bed reading. "Lisa," I began. She glared at me. "Lisa, maybe it wasn't such a good idea to room together. We never fought like this before. Maybe people were right, saying a friendship can't withstand all this time together. Lisa, you're my best friend. You have been for as long as I can remember. I don't want to lose you now. Maybe one of us should move out next semester – into a different room. Look, isn't your friend Joyce's roommate transferring in January? Maybe you should see if you can move in with her." She looked at me for a minute, then nodded slowly.

The rest of the semester whizzed by. The vacation was rather long, though. Lisa and I didn't see each other once for an entire month. I thought it best not to get together. We'd seen enough of each other in school. I supposed Lisa felt the same way. It was nice, seeing my friends from high school again, but Lisa's absence left a hole.

Second semester began in school, and Lisa moved in with Joyce. I rarely saw her. While Lisa was packing, we'd said little to each other. I didn't know what to say. She was like a stranger.

I kept hoping she would call me. I had the same phone we had first semester, so she knew the number. I didn't know hers and didn't try to find it out. I reasoned that since she knew the number, she should make the first move. But I missed her. Even with my other friends and my new roommate, I was lonely.

I saw her in the cafeteria, but I looked away quickly. It hurt so much, not being with her. I wanted to talk to her, but I would not go over to her. Stubbornness has always been one of my personality flaws.

A few weeks later, I went home for the weekend. I was tired and just wanted to rest, but my mother sent me out to the supermarket. After getting the few items she needed, I trudged back to my car. I looked across the parking lot, and there was Lisa, staring at me. I smiled slightly, and she made her way over to me, beginning to smile also. By the time she reached me, we were both laughing. "What took you so long," we said at the same time.

Maybe there's hope for us yet.

– Sharon Zwillinger

illustration by Karen A. Nickel

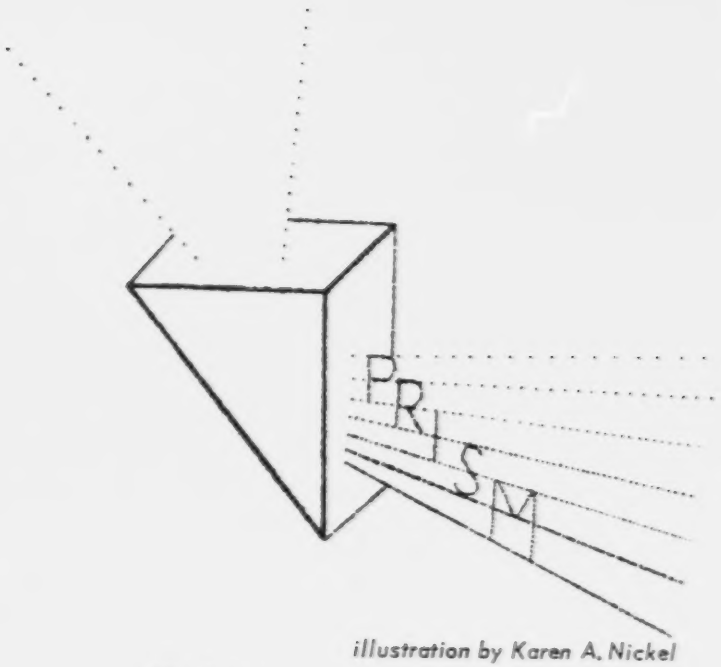


illustration by Karen A. Nickel

Prism

True lines exist,
penetrate,
But do not shatter.
They remain entangled,
entombed,
in a dense, but transparent crystal figure.

Perfection,
lies within the perplexity of a labyrinth.
Fathomless, yet we persist,
insisting that it is fathomable.

A beam breaks,
reality,
depicting a spectrum,
of colors. But we know it's illusion.
The image will never last,
But the mirage is eternal.

Liz Scherr

Diamonds in the Snow

Diamonds fell in the snow last night.
This morning they tinkled off the roof,
As the sun warmed the claws
That clutched during the night.
If I were to put on boots
A scarf and red mittens
And crunch out among the diamonds
I might get cut,
By diamonds that fell in the snow
Glistening, almost wet in the hot sun
It's not hot enough to melt diamonds
Beckoning; tiny, razor edges, waiting.
Better, maybe to sit at a window
And watch the diamonds
Wondering when they will melt,
Watch the diamonds that fell in the snow
As the sun melts behind the horizon
The diamonds twinkle, cool, cooler
Snow begins to fall, among the diamonds
Beckoning; tiny, razor edges, waiting.

– Jennifer Collins

illustration by Suzy Soffler

The Window to the World

It tells all.
Hides no lies.
No blemish, wrinkle, imperfection...
...can be hidden from its gaze.

We wish...
...That it were different.

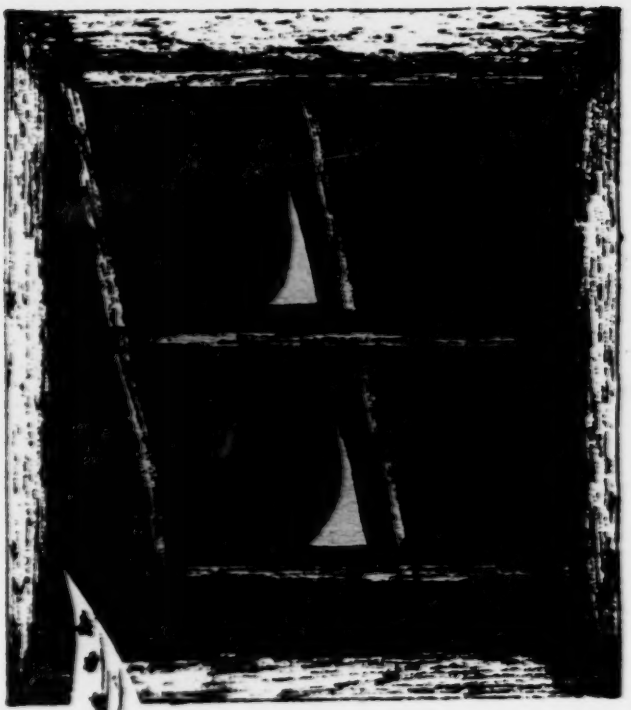
We hope...(the next time we look)
things will have changed.

The Window to the World

It tells all
Hides no lies.
No, nothing can be hidden—
—from its gaze.

We wish. (that it were different)
We hope. (next time we look)
Things will have changed.

—Jeannine Rippa



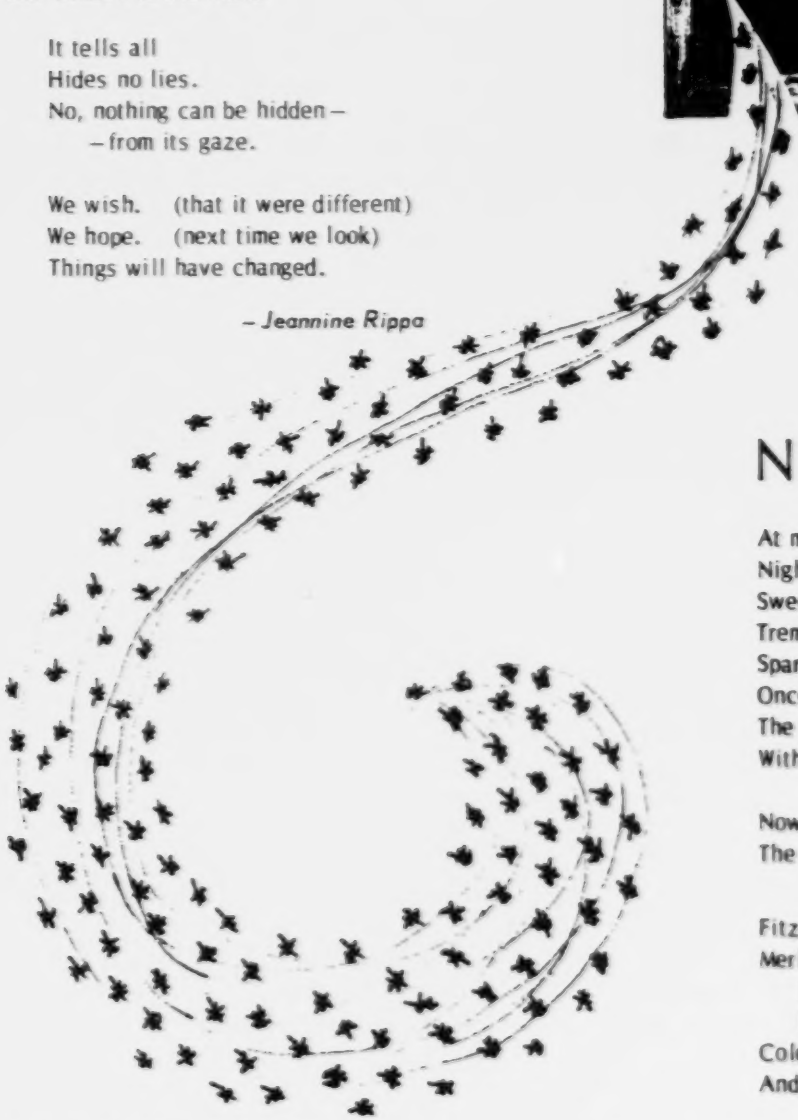


illustration by Karen A. Nickel

Night

At my door
Night breathes
Sweet and smoky and sharp;
Trembling stars glimmer
Sparse in the dark fluid night.
Once canopied over a child
The lucid sky flushed to the round rimming
With light like a star-spattered
upturned bowl.
Now, aged and distant and dimmed,
The lights brood in smog.

• • •

Fitzgerald discerned the stars' "silver pepper."
Merlin envisioned *Arturos*, the Bear—the Comet.
I only saw God's light,
Bright, thin, unreachable.
Cold, I walked within
And locked the door.

—Julie Kwa

A Matter of Etiquette

Aunt Alice sat directly across from me. She wore a chiffon lavender print dress and looked dignified, yet relaxed. I knew I must be on my best behavior and reached for a cube of sugar, gracefully, with my pinky extended, to sweeten my tea.

"No, no, no dear! Use the spoon," Aunt Alice exclaimed.

My heart fell. I had been perfect up to that moment and now I was sure I had been "socially embarrassed." Yet, Aunt Alice continued her one-sided conversation freely, and I knew the incident had been forgotten.

Now I was able to relax and observe the tastefully decorated apartment. It was indeed a grand place, yet in a modest way, as was my hostess. The apartment was filled with magnificent pieces of furniture and accessories that Aunt Alice had accumulated on her travels all over the world. I especially took notice of an oriental bonsai tree with petals of rose quartz and leaves of jade, sitting on the coffee table in front of me. I thought it beautiful, and inquired where she had gotten it.

"Why, from Japan, of course. Where else does one get a bonsai tree?"

I looked down at the miniature work of art and then back to my aunt, comparing the two. In a sense they were a lot alike. The petals and leaves sparkled with happiness as did Alice's eyes. The tree represented the fine craftsmanship my aunt enjoyed and encouraged. Yet, the tree would never grow nor would it change in any way save that which suited it, for it was stubborn.

My thoughts were interrupted by the long spell of silence that passed between us, and I thought that now would be as good a time as any to bring up the subject I knew both of us were evading.

"You know, Aunt Alice, I don't know as much about you as I would like. Dad hasn't told me much."

"I know, dear, and you're entitled to an explanation. It must be very strange to wake up one day and find that you have a great aunt and a whole slew of other relations that you never knew existed."

"Well, yes, but..."

"Perhaps you would like to hear how that came about, eh?"

"Why yes, I would, if you don't mind telling me," I said with a tinge of fear in my voice, afraid that I would never learn the truth about my family if my aunt wished otherwise.

"Well, it all started before you were born...," began Aunt Alice.

I breathed a sigh of relief. Alice was going to tell me everything.

"My sister, your grandmother, and I never got along very well," she continued. "As children we always fought but mother prayed that when we got older, we would be friends. However, my mother's prayers were to no avail for when we got older, I do believe the fighting got worse. My dear, you will find that when fewer and fewer words are exchanged between two people it usually means their fighting has gotten worse, and I'm sorry to say that words were becoming dangerously scarce between us.

. . .afraid that I would never learn the truth about my family, if my aunt wished otherwise

I think one of the reasons we never got along too well was the fact that we were too much alike. I remember when we were both invited to a very fancy party, nothing out of the ordinary for me, of course. I had purchased a simply exquisite dress and I kept it top secret, under lock and key. Finally, the day of the party came and, would you believe that my sister came to the party in the exact dress! Now, try to understand, this was an expensive, extravagant, and supposedly original dress. Of course, I went home and changed immediately. Can you imagine how embarrassed I was; what a horrible encounter that had been?"

"Yes, of course," I said to humor her because I wanted to hear the rest of the story. Actually, I considered it

rather amusing and saw nothing outrageous in this incident, unlike my aunt. I decided to take a chance and tell her this, "but maybe..."

"Quiet dear, don't interrupt me. Now, where was I? Oh yes,..."

I knew it was senseless to continue my statement. There was no stopping her now.

"Soon after that, I was on the phone with your grandmother, having a healthy argument again. In my rage, I claimed my sister had hung up on me, and she claimed likewise. Each of us used the other as a scapegoat, to blame for all our fights and problems in the past. This, my darling, was the last fight my sister and I were to ever have, and was the grievance of this ridiculous feud.

We neither saw nor spoke to each other after that moment. It – it was a matter of pride, you see. I mean, after all, I wasn't going to give in first. The family split up– she kept her life, her children, and her children's children isolated from the rest of the family, and I isolated mine the same; until that tragic moment.

Your father had called me and told me my sister, your grandmother, had died. Throughout the phone call and during the funeral, I was in shock. I hadn't spoken to her in twenty-five years and now I desperately tried to remember my logic for doing this; I could not. I tried to recreate the telephone scene in my mind. The thought never occurred to me all these years that we could have been disconnected. I realize now that it really makes no difference what happened that day, for nothing could make up for the wasted years. Whatever the fact, the real disconnection resulted in the destruction of a family. Your father then spoke to me, and we decided, for the children's sake, we should renew family relations. How sad that the family bonds were strengthened by tragedy. In a way, my sister could have been a sacrifice so that the realization of how silly this feud was and the reconciliation of the family could take place.

So now you know the truth, but you will never know how I suffered from a lack of my family. Always remember, dear, a family is a wonderful gift, so never abandon it. Your father never spoke of me because he always was a firm believer in the living and reality, and, in regard to you and your generation, I was neither. However, this is a new beginning for me."

"It is a new beginning for me, as well," I added. I looked at her face and for the first time noticed the resemblance to my grandmother in her features. Then I looked down at the bonsai tree, which seemed less rigid and stiff than when I first saw it. It seemed to flourish rapidly, yet gracefully, giving off a radiance, like sunlight.

– Charlene Flick

illustration by Erin Barrett

OPENING NIGHT

Twas the night before opening
And all through the house
Not a creature was stirring
Not even a mouse.
The orchestra silent
The crew not in sight
Not a soul could be found
Save the lonely playwright
His features were pale,
his jaw opened wide
As if he was saying
"I'm hurting inside."
The actors on strike,
The rehearsals went slow
The director ran off
With the star of the show!
The producer didn't know what
he was doing.
The critics predicted this play
not worth viewing.
But the playwright had worked
too hard on his play
To give it all up in less than a day.
He must save his play,
For it was a mess,
And turn it into a giant success.
And so, I come to the end of my story,
For opening night he basked in his glory.
"The show must go on!" I heard him exclaim
For not giving up was the name of the game.

– Charlene Flick

The Rain Falls

The rain falls
Softly, silently, gently
Until it is stopped
By the Hard, Dry Earth

– Bernadette Palumbo

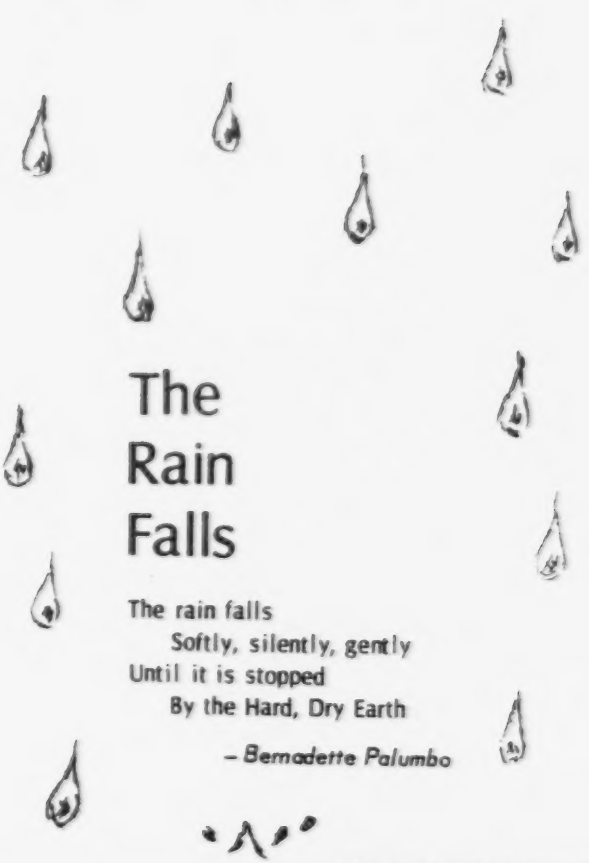


illustration by Karen A. Nickel

illustration by Suzy Soffler

Cat

She lays sleepily in warm sunlight
Stretching long limbs of sleek black
She purrs softly, swishing her tail
in sleepy delight.
Suddenly she lashes out—claws
outstretched, teeth bared,
Leopard-green guiltless eyes stare
back at fright.
And then with a contented purr,
she falls back,
on the bed, asleep.

– Diane Katavolos

Springset

The backyard swingset stands useless,
A rusty relic of his youth.
Cookie crumbs and lollipop stains,
Spot the patterned blue and white frame.
Home from school, no time to stop,
The sky is shining and the snow is gone.
Out in the back to swing and slide,
With his friends to sometimes cry.
With nose in book, he sometimes wonders
How it feels to be four feet or under,
And he thinks of his swingset all blue and white
And he remembers fondly, those spring days bright.

– David Lubell

The Driveway

Crevices running, writhing, racing–
Bending and turning at every step
Crossing each other,
Dividing the black tar
Into myriad islands
Sinking slowly into the earth.
How smooth it had been
Whole
Unbroken
When first it was laid down.
But water had seeped in,
Grass had struggled through;
The wind
And rain
And snow
Had beat upon it–
Nature's many hands
Breaking the work
Of man's puny fingers.

– Suzy Soffler

illustration by Karen A. Nickel

GROWING UP

One day, a young girl went to the animal shelter with her parents. For years, she had wanted a kitten but her parents had always refused her, saying, "You'll just play with it, and we'll feed it and take care of it." However, they had also promised that when she was older and more responsible, she'd get her wish.

Well that day had come, and she was excited. She was so impatient that she was actually dragging her parents by their hands to the door of the shelter. She couldn't understand why her parents' excitement did not match her own. As a matter of fact, her parents had been dreading this day, but they loved their daughter dearly and wanted to honor her wish. So, the three of them opened the door and went in.

The first reaction of her parents was very negative. The smell that hit them when they walked in was not at all pleasant or inviting. Even the little girl was disheartened. Then, from across the room, a faint scratching noise was heard along with some soft "meows." The girl approached gingerly and peered over the edge of the box. She didn't say a word, but let out a small sigh and gazed into the box with adoration. Her parents gave each other a quick glance and also approached the box. Their stern expressions melted, and they too were enthralled with the sight: five newborn kittens curled around each other. They were beautiful. Two were calico, two black, and one grey. The girl carefully lifted out the grey kitten. He was a magnificent, fluffy, and warm mass of grey cotton. He looked up at her for a brief second and then went back to sleep. Again, she sighed. Her parents looked at their daughter and smiled. They nodded to each other, as if to say, "That's the one." They knew their daughter well, or so they thought. They also knew that she loved and admired beauty.

Soon, however, they were puzzled because she put back the kitten and walked toward the kennels in the back, followed by her parents. Her father, a wise man, asked, "What's wrong? He's a cute little thing, don't you think?" She just answered, "Yeah, he's very cute." Her father noticed that she was looking into a kennel of older cats. She knelt down and tried to pet one that was lying on the ground by sticking her hand through the cage. The girl asked a worker who had been filling water bowls to tell her about the scrawny, dark grey cat. He said, "Poor fella, he's too young to put with these cats, but too old for the kittens." All the while, the girl was staring at the cat, who looked so tense and uneasy among the older cats. When she asked if she could hold him, her parents looked astonished. "What would she want with that cat?" her parents thought. Nevertheless, he was taken out and placed in her arms. He clung to her and looked as if he had needed a human touch desperately. "In a way, I need him too," thought the girl. She could give him love, attention and care, and in return he would give her a feeling of maturity and responsibility. When she said, "This is the cat I want," her parents understood that their little girl was growing up and realizing that giving can be much more satisfying and rewarding than receiving.

Barbara Bloom

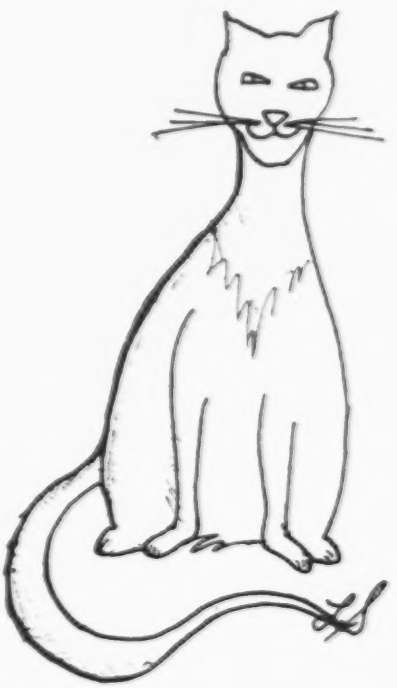


illustration by Liz Scherr

Crab Apple Tree

A strong gust hits the bare limbs.
A few shriveled black crab apples dangle
Sickly off fragile twigs, twisting around
And then back in the hateful blast.
The limbs cringe
From the cold wind, turning feebly away.
The wind abates, for a moment;
The limbs uncoil, shivering and a new blast blows
And the dark branches cringe again.

– Daniel Scherr

Sentries

Sun-bright rays
Splinter
Through the forest.
Sun-blazed beams
Drift
Through the canopies,
Now bare.
Sun-warmed glow
Diffuses
To the earth,
Frozen below.
Black, black trunks
One after another after another
Scatter the glare.
Stripes of shine
And shadow
And shine again
Divide the ground.
Fire descends.
Silhouettes
Guard
Their precious station.

– Karen Droga

illustration by Karen A. Nickel

The Senior's Tale

(with apologies to Geoffrey Chaucer)

General Prologue:

There was a Senior who wore mirrored glasses
And upturned his nose at all the masses.
His jacket was made of the finest black leather,
And set him apart from all others whether
They wished to be like him, or likelier still
They'd rather not have one and stand a slight chill.
His hair he wore cropped quite close to his head,
Back straight as an arrow, or so it was said.
His jazz-shoes he polished with infinite care;
To always be safe, he kept a spare pair.
His motto was simple; "I am what I am."
But he wanted much more from his yellow Trans-Am.
When a joke he heard from a classmate or friend,
The edge of his mouth would slowly upend.
But never a giggle escaped from his lips—
He always watched out for those kinds of slips.

Many things bothered this soul-searching man,
Especially by April the loss of his tan.
When plying with members of the opposite gender,
The considerate fellow became quite a spender,
For though he did know the value of coinage,
On dates, he would rather procure the edge
Than worry about money or such trifling matters.
He'd hand out his heart on golden platters.
His college-hunting technique never would fail
Cause he'd checked all the ratios of male to female.
His low SAT scores bothered him not
Since any much higher would ruin his plot.
He'd have to explain why his school work of late
Did not coincide with his test scores to date.
When faced with a problem, he never would grieve
To take active part in the party that eve.

Senior's Prologue:

"I never," began the Senior, "like to be
The center of attention in mixed company.
Usually, my stories are told only to girls
Who regard them as gems more precious than pearls.
The reason, in fact, that I now tell this tale
Is I know I could win this dull game without fail.
You will see," he continued as he rolled up his sleeve,
"The captivating story that I shall now weave."

Senior's Tale:

I hate to begin with myself, but then
To interest you, at once, in my story when
You've heard many others is surely a feat.
But, this way I'll grab you, rivet you to your seat.
I arrived at her house precisely at eight
For my habit has been to never be late.
My powder-blue tie complemented my socks.
I admit I looked sharp—a good-looking fox.
My hair had been combed so neatly in place
That it squarely set off the traits of my face.
As I rounded her street in my little sports car,
The youngsters all stared, and watched from afar.
And they all could hear my engine quite loudly,
"A bit like a race-car," I'd thought rather proudly.
I ran up the steps that lead to her home
And, ringing the doorbell, I pulled out my comb
For a last-minute touch-up just to make sure
That I look truly great as I stand by the door.
Waiting is hard on people who seek
The approval of others—We're really quite meek.
When she came to the door, it was quite a rare treat:
She was pretty and looked fine in the passenger's seat.

As we drove down the street, she started to speak
Of schoolwork and things that were terribly bleak.
We spoke of her grades, though I do not care
For topics like this one, so I started to stare
At the road as it rolled on slowly ahead,
Then I stepped on the gas to the point where she said,
"Now surely you know you could go a bit slower."
How little she knows about gunning a motor!

When we got to the movies, I made quite a show
Of holding her door, but I must let you know
That measures like these are deliberated
For young maidens' minds are heavily weighted
When making decisions concerning their honor.
Through the years I've become a bit of a "conner."

The movie was boring and not all that sad;
The popcorn was stale and really quite bad.
But all was not lost, as I said to my date,
"The night is still young—it's not very late."
So we drove through the town, and where it was dark
I shifted the gears and put it in "park."
But in her young mind strange thoughts did lurk:
She wanted to leave and finish her work
On the project for English that soon would be due.
I couldn't believe our evening was through!
Yet what happened next you will not believe—
No. I mustn't tell you. I'd rather leave
Than injure this poor lady's reputation
By revealing the next minutes' occupation.
For fear that I may appear to be bragging,
I'll stop right here. Anyway, time is lagging
And I must get some rest. I'm awfully beat
From telling this story in all the day's heat.
And, by the way, if you want to know,
I won't be telling more tales of woe,
For this dull game has got me bored.
When I am through, not another word
Will be spoken by me since I don't care
For more of my experiences with you to share.
It's not that I don't have some others to tell
But, rather, this one has been told very well.
Thus, others to be told never could steal
From me the prize of the promised meal.

– Debbie Reich

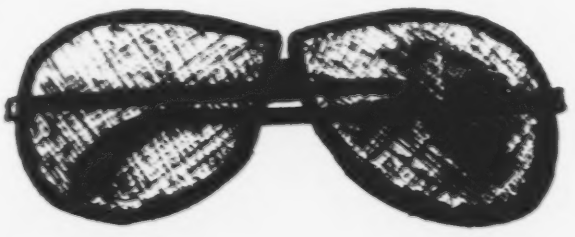


illustration by Sheila Morley

Indecision

Well, if I could
then what would I do?
I could do that,
if I knew,
I don't think it's right
but then again...yes
I should do that,
but then...unless
Maybe I shouldn't.
or maybe I should,
I'd surely learn how,
if I would.
While writing this poem,
Thoughts became twisted,
I guess the point–
I must have missed it...

– Pamela Brown

unsympathy

Hey–
You're not the only one
Who's upset.
Hey, I've got problems, too.
And I'm sure John over there does,
also.
Well, listen, buddy,
Just because you've got
metaphors
similies
images
At your fingertips,
Well, that doesn't mean your plight
Is so much more
Desperate and dramatic and heartrending
and where's-my-handkerchief
Than anyone else's.
What's it mean if you don't use it?
Huh?
Can you feel for anyone else?
Hey, I am sorry for you.
Don't think I'm not.
Just remember,
If you can't hear my cry for help,
How do you know
I can hear yours?

Suzy Soffler

The Night Before Finals

Twas the night before finals, when all through the dorm,
Students were cramming every ditto and form;
Their backs were hunched over miscellaneous desks,
And complaints were heard of the cricks in their necks;
Exams again, would they never end?
Surely some miracle will halt this trend;
Graduation, that would definitely do it,
Or failure, God, if their parents only knew it.
Well, press on, to hell with the pain,
It's better than seeing this semester again;
The hours dragged on, intense and slow,
When finally the morning revealed her glow;
And when these young pupils gave a satisfied sigh,
Suddenly, nuclear suns lit up the sky;
And when all the schools were torn to the ground,
Not a started exam was ever to be found;
But the craziest thing about that sad day,
Was that most of these kids were prepared for an "A"!

– Debbie Ingerman

Projection

Massive disaster
Running ever faster
Screaming in the street
People falling at your feet
All the children dead
Blasted in the heart and head

Sunday Monday
Never see the sun's ray
Here we see a noble man
Sitting dying in his van
Lights off power on
What's the use the Earth is gone

War
Roar
Evermore . . . . . .

Suzy Soffler

When I die and I'm six feet deep
place two speakers at my feet,
with my Walkman on my head
I'll eternally rock to the Grateful Dead.

– John Smith

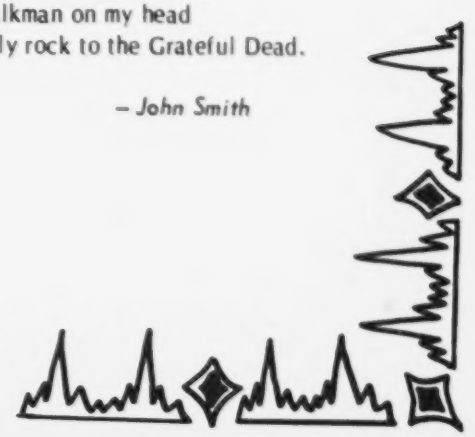


illustration by Erin Barrett

I walked away from my laughing husband and son in response to the doorbell. I was still grinning over the joke my youngest child, Steven, had just told. My smile diminished only for a second when I opened the door, for it was replaced with a polite one which tried hard to be sincere.

I invited the young girl in and in spite of myself I admired her soft shining brown hair. My husband always said I was crazy when I ridiculed my own dull mouse brown hair. I scrutinized her face, and she looked up at me with a puzzled expression, her blue eyes questioning my green ones. Although her face was pale like a doll's, her eyes held wisdom of some sort, as if she understood the true nature of people because she had suffered from it. I contemplated this idea. I had heard gossip about her parents, and I knew that she was now living with her father and an extremely young stepmother. However, the divorce must not have been too bad since my son told me that she still kept up her straight "A" average.

The moment was broken when she smiled brightly at me, and asked if my eldest son, Kevin, was ready.

"He's upstairs but will be right down, you can wait here with us."

She walked into the living room and seated herself next to Steven

"Hello, Mr. Rothman," she directed at my spouse.

"Hello, Robin, how are you?"

"Pretty good, and yourself?"

"Everything is fine over here, no complaints."

"So what's new Steven? Did a cute sixth grader steal you away from me yet?" His face turned red as he mumbled back, "Naw, I'm still yours Rob."

He changed the subject by saying, "Do you want to hear a good joke?" and excitedly retold the story, again filling the room with laughter, this time only without mine.

I heard footsteps coming down the stairs and Kevin walked into the room with his wet hair dripping, making dots on his T-shirt.

"Mom, can I have some money? Robin and I want to rent a movie and go get some lunch."

"Yes. Is a twenty enough?"

"Yeah."

He beamed a dazzling smile at Robin and walked over to her and squeezed her hand. This was as far as they dared go in my presence.

"Ready?" Kevin asked.

"Yup, just let me put on my jacket and we'll go," Robin replied.

I heard the sound of the garage door going up, my son starting the motor of his Trans-Am, and then they were gone. I went upstairs to do my nails. After I finished I decided to make myself some tea. Kevin and Robin had already come back from Burger King and had their food laid out on the coffee table.

I sat at the kitchen table listening to their conversation, well concealed by the half-wall in between the kitchen and the living room. They spoke like friends, in a comfortable tone. One might have thought they were except from the occasional giggles and kisses, the usual sounds of a couple in love.

My son was smart, I knew that. However, I couldn't help but wonder what he would be like without my husband's and my constant encouragement. Would he have a 92 average? Would he go to medical school to become a doctor?

It didn't matter what he would have been like without us pushing, because he was what we wanted him to be; someone leaving in a few weeks for Brown University to obtain a medical degree.

He never had any other influences to guide him in other directions. We made sure of that. He always had been mostly quiet with only a couple of close friends. Until Robin, I never had to worry what he was thinking about. I always knew I was still in control. Kevin was good looking with his black hair and my green eyes. I faced the fact a long time ago that girls would be enter-

ing his life and taking him away from me. But I'd been lucky. He was quiet and insecure and never really came into contact with anyone seriously until he met Robin. Her open bubbly personality probably was the attraction. She was everything he wasn't. She could laugh and talk with anyone easily. My husband liked her a great deal, for unlike me, he did not see the threat she held to the family. I zeroed in on part of their conversation.

"Don't the Glickmans live on your block?" Robin asked Kevin.

"Yeah, why?"

"Well, when Mrs. Glickman said hi to me and asked me how my dad was, how come you didn't say hello?"

"We're not really friends with them. They're crazy."

"How do you know?"

"Because my parents and the Steinmans know them."

"But have they ever done anything to you for you not to like her?"

"No."

"Well then, how can you make that judgment?" excitement rose in her voice. "Don't you think you should give someone a chance unless they've offended you? I happen to think she is very nice."

"Robin, I don't know. You're making me confused, and I'm really not in the mood to get in an argument right now."

"O.K., I'm sorry," and she gave him a peck.

I felt the heat rising to my face. Why couldn't that goddamn girl keep her mouth shut and mind her own business? How my family feels about another family was of no concern to that trivial girl! God, if I didn't get her away from him soon I thought I would go crazy.

After a few minutes I walked into the living room.

"Do either of you want anything to drink?" I asked.

"No thank you, Mom, we got cokes at Burger King."

"Thanks anyway, Mrs. Rothman."

I returned to the kitchen and made myself some more tea and added vodka. I sat down once again at the kitchen table. I could barely make out the mumbling in the next room.

"Where's your mom?"

"I think she made tea and went upstairs, why?"

"Oh, no reason, I was just wondering." She paused a few seconds.

"Kevin, does your mom like me?"

"Yes, of course she does. What made you think she didn't?"

"Sometimes I feel like she is trying to be nice, but inside she really doesn't like me too much. I don't know. Maybe it's all in my mind. Maybe I'm crazy."

"To tell you the truth I agree with you."

My heart sank.

"Really, you do?"

"Yup, I agree that you're crazy.....about me, of course."

She laughed. I let out my breath.

I awoke to the loud buzz of my alarm. It read 6:30. My husband lay next to me, and the steady rhythm of his breathing told me he was still sleeping. Mechanically, I got up to take a shower. I went through the usual early-morning routine that I did twice a week. The nursery school was a fun place to work, and the children were delightful. I got out of the shower and put on my new matching skirt and blouse. Then I set my hair and left the house by 8:00 A.M.

The 8:30 bell welcomed the excited screams of children entering the school. The activity for the day was to help the children make mobiles. After explaining to the kids what was to be done, I walked around and checked on everyone's work. I praised rainbows, hamburgers, turtles, cars, and other things children liked to draw. After approving of a little girl's teddy bears and lollypops, I felt a tug on my skirt.

"Meryl, Meryl!" a little boy said, trying to capture my attention. I wasn't surprised to hear my first name, for it was easier for the kids to remember.

"Meryl, look at this! Look at my birdie family!"

I glanced down at the mobile the little boy held in his hands. It had a mother bird sitting in her nest, and three baby birds hanging from it.

illustration by Karen A. Nickel

"Look how the baby birds follow the mama-bird however she turns!" the little boy shouted.

"That's great Billy, and just to show how good I really think it is, I'll hang it up right here by the door so everyone can see it when they walk in.

"You know I love you, and I don't want to see you hurt, but you must face up to reality."

The day finally ended and I dragged my tired, limp body home. I pulled into the garage and walked in to find Steven eating a bowl of Cap'n Crunch.

"Hi, Mom."

"Hi, honey. How was school? Did you get an "A" on your spelling?"

"Yes, I got a hundred."

"Good boy! Stop eating that cereal. We're going to be having dinner in an hour and a half."

After my husband came home from work, my family sat down at the table waiting for dinner to be served. The steak looked delicious, and my men wasted no time in digging in. When my husband was able to divert his attention away from the fantastic meal he asked, "So, Kev, how does it feel to be going away to college in two weeks?"

"Okay, I guess." His voice was suddenly sad.

"Why just okay, Kevin?" my husband asked concerned.

Kevin timidly answered, "Well, I'm nervous, and I'm going to miss Robin a lot."

"That was just the subject I wanted to talk with you about."

I cut in. "You know, honey, that you are going to meet many more people in college, and I'm sure Robin isn't going to just sit around here and wait for you to come home once every month. I mean, not to hurt your feelings angel, but I wouldn't be surprised if she found someone new the week after you left."

My husband shot me such a stern look of disapproval that I became worried. Kevin gazed at me with amazement that the words he had just heard had come from my mouth. Because of the hurt look on his face, I thought he was about to cry, but suddenly his sadness disappeared and he glared at me with such hate that I shrank back. Steven sat in his seat, his eyes skipping from face to face as if he were watching a tennis game. I could tell he had the urge to run up to his room.

"Mom, you have some nerve to speak about Robin that way! You know how much I love her! She would never do that to me!!!"

I paused, took a breath, and gathered myself together.

"First of all, Kevin Rothman, don't you ever raise your voice to me like that again." Hearing me take control, Kevin bowed his head down, and instantly felt guilty. "Second, you're right, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that, and I'm most likely wrong. But honey, you have to realize that you both are going to be leading different lives. You are going to have your world and she is going to have hers. You know I love you, and I don't want to see you hurt, but you must face up to reality."

I looked into his face and his expression held more pain than I had ever seen in his face before. I could see the sparkle of a threatening tear in one of his green eyes. My heart would have broken for him had the situation not been about that invading girl.

With my apologetic speech over, everything was right. My husband was not angry for I had taken back the rudeness of what I'd said. The message that their relationship must end had embedded itself in Kevin's brain. My younger son still continued to think that mommy did no wrong and always knew what was best.

Kevin and Robin continued to go out for the next week. I began to worry that he had secretly changed his mind. Tonight they planned to watch a T.V. movie here at the house. After Kevin walked in the door with Robin, I noticed he seemed to be on edge. Steven was sleeping at a friend's house, and my husband was working late. I told them if they needed anything that I would be upstairs.

After a few minutes I snuck downstairs and quietly sat at the kitchen table. I lit up a cigarette, listened, and waited. They were silent until the movie was over.

"Kevin, are you okay?"

"Yeah, why?"

"Well, you're just acting funny and I thought that maybe something was bothering you."

"No, nothing's bothering me, but thanks for asking."

"My pleasure."

I began to grow impatient.

She spoke again, "Kevin, look at me. Smile.....no, I want a real one. If you don't give me a real smile I'm just going to have to tickle you!!!"

I heard my son burst out laughing.

"Stop it Robin, quit it!"

"I'm sorry, I was only kidding around."

"Rob.....I do have to talk to you about something," his voice revealing his conflict. She knew him inside out

after six months and was afraid to ask, but had to.

"What?"

My son was silent.

"What?" she repeated, her voice cracking.

"What are we going to do about me going to college?"

Her voice changed its tone, it now held anger and suspicion. "I thought it was understood that we were going to continue seeing each other."

"I thought that, too. But I've thought it over and I think that maybe we ought to discuss it again."

"Yeah, right you thought it over," she mumbled.

"Robin, I don't see how our relationship will be able to work. I am going to have my own world and you are going to have yours."

"Don't give me this, Kevin. We both know who's talking now!!!"

"I have no idea what you're talking about!"

"It's your mother isn't it? Don't answer me. I already know. How can you listen to her, Kev? I know you love me! You know that I would do anything for you. How could you let her tear us apart?"

"Shhh, she's just upstairs, and besides it's not her. She has NOTHING to do with it! It was me, only ME!"

"Oh, God," her voice broke and she sobbed. "There's no use in talking to you now. You're not going to listen to me."

I heard her heels on the floor as she walked over to the chair her jacket was on. My son walked over to her.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Home."

"At least let me drive you."

"No," she burst out crying. "That's okay."

I heard the front door open and slam. Kevin slid down against the door, and sat there in a silence which seemed to last forever. Suddenly he began heaving powerful sobs that came from his chest.

The next morning I awoke to the sound of my alarm clock, and fell into my early morning routine. I left the house at 8:00 and drove over to the nursery school. As I walked in the door I noticed the little boy's mobile in the doorway. A gentle breeze caused it to move, and as the mother-bird turned, so followed the baby birds.

–Debbie Ingerman

Change

Change creeps up
    Like a wave
Crashing
    Against the beaches of time
And shattering dreams.

– Bernadette Polumbo

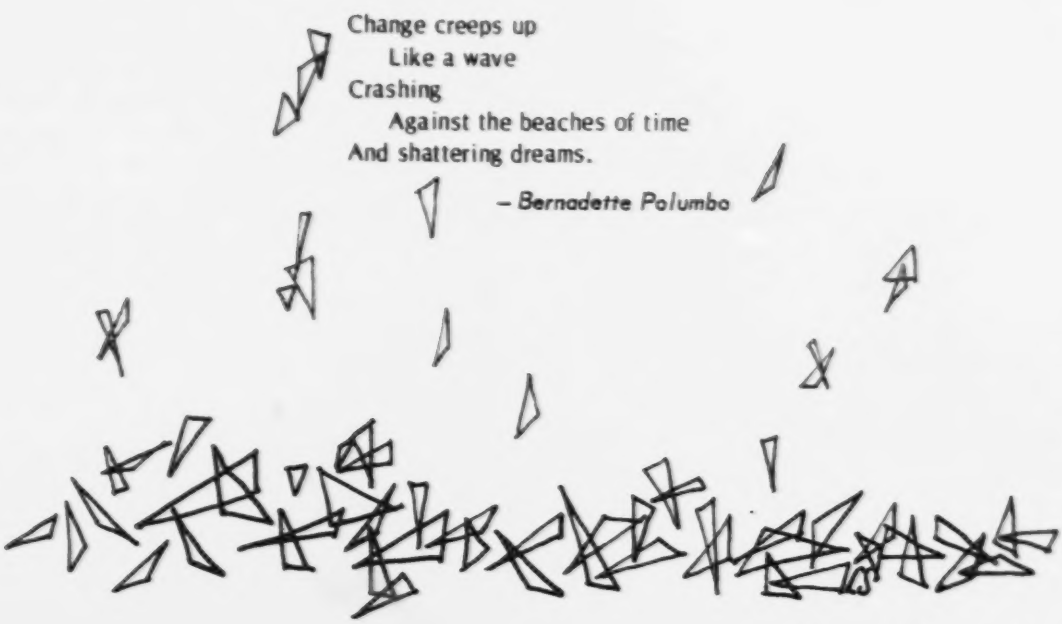


illustration by Liz Scherr

On Listening to Mahler's Ninth Symphony

Softly,
you begin.
Melancholia?
No, you despair.
A funereal undercurrent
muffles the violin's sobs, and
Shriek!
Each of your cries wrenches one from me...
Crash!
Your shattering despair destroys my comfort.
Every measure tears down
yet another defense,
stripping my pretentions,
until I am
naked
vulnerable
helpless
to your strangling chords.
Then with every swell you rip
my soul from me,
your timpanies trampling it with your misery.

Bells toll
and my naivete is no more.
Maturity,
the trumpet heralds.
But even after your last cry
I find no rest:
your struggle ended long ago;
mine is just beginning.

– Karen A. Nickel

illustrations by Suzy Soffler

Father to Son

(It's called "Word Association," son.
Okay. What do I do?
Just say the first word that pops into your head.
Ready?
Yeah.)
Atom.
Bomb.
Cell.
Jail.
Tissue.
Diseases.
Organ.
Death hymns.
Organism.
Man. Or the Blob.
Neurosis.
(Hey, I don't know that word. How can I think of something to go with it?
Well, it's something that makes you unreasonably afraid.
Oh. Well, isn't that what you got me the rifle for?)
Huh?

– Suzy Soffler

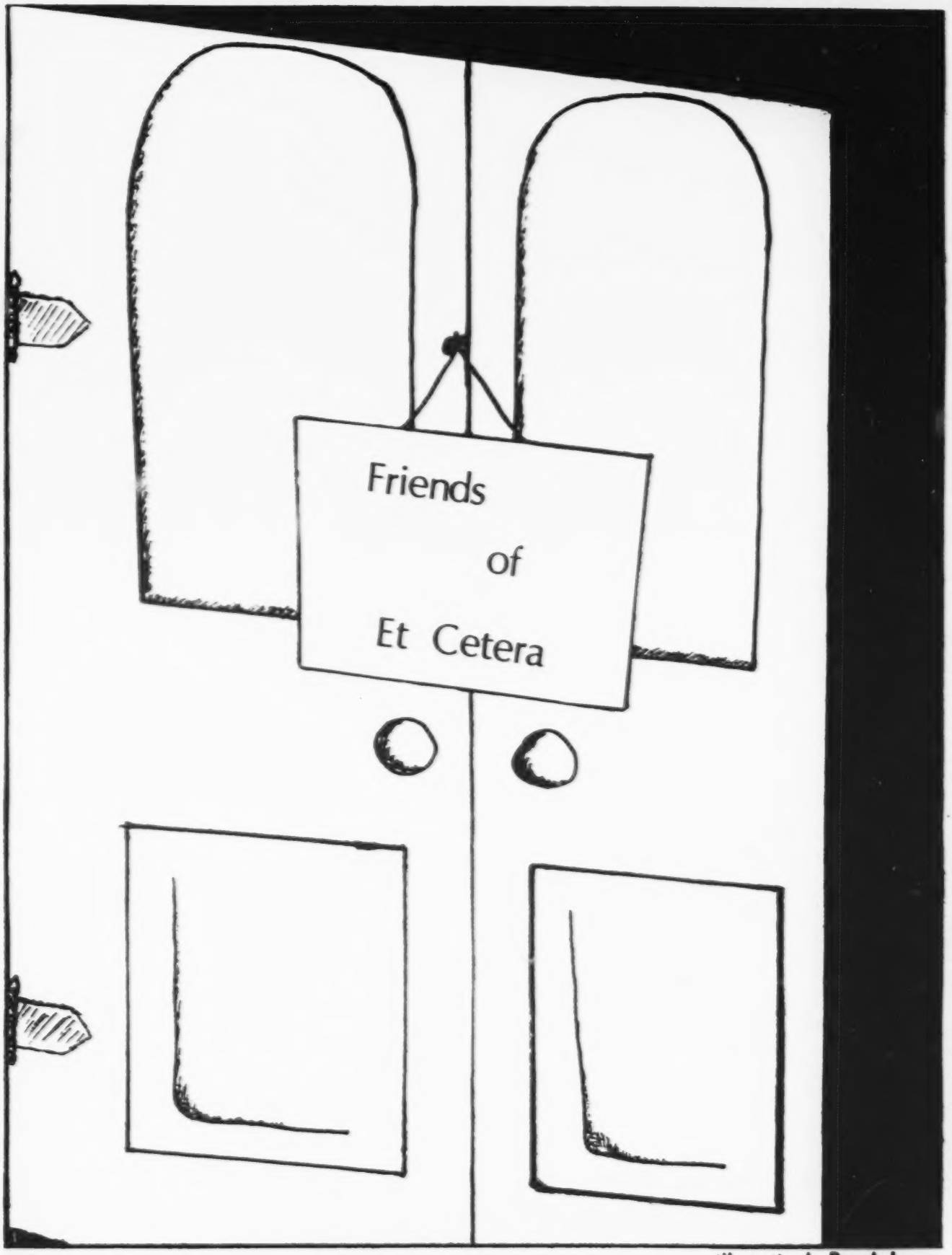


illustration by Pamela Lyons

Good Luck
to
The Staff
of
Et Cetera

Charlene Beth Flick, Lauren Cara Flick, Joel J. Flick

Congratulations to the Staff of *Et Cetera* 1984

Our best wishes for future success,
to you, and the magazine!

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Et Cetera Boosters

LC, 2K, Floozy, and Lori–HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!!! Charle
CB 2K SH SZ etc. (excuse the pun) to a great year & great friends! L.C.F.
To Stacy & Ellen–Only roses could be as sweet, big brother
To Erin & Liz–Keep passing open windows, Barid.
Congratulations–Mr. Dillon
Joan–Hee, hee, hee, hee, hee–Mona and Wilma
What is the meaning of life? Nothing! Nothing at all!
Have a superior, sensual sensation–study with a sophomore. Sonny & Carlo
Alea iacta est.–Mr. Sellitti
To the great Doctor from 1st period: Long live Z.
To my little blonde flower and best friend, love always, Eric
Erin,–To cannibals, Espirit and sweet sixteen–Love, Sheila
Liz,–Always remember: "Ag_+ is a color" Love, Sheila
Erin,–Have a nice day–Love, Liz
Sheila–Have we mastered the skill of opening doors yet? Love, Liz
Understand this Mag.? Write! I understand Box 13 Lye, N.Y. 10929
First Place Again! Etc. Etc. Etc! Congratulations from *Saga* '84
The library–where learning never ends.
Everybody get psyched for the summer! Pool party at K. Pfaff's.

Policy

Et Cetera magazine has been published each spring for the past twenty-six years. It is completely a student effort (except for the sagacious advice of our wonderful advisor); created by, of, and for the students of CHSN. Acceptance to the magazine is based upon a five-point marking system ranging from poor to superior. Each submission is read by twelve judges who independently grade it. Those pieces with the highest scores receive one final editorial review before acceptance. Contained in this magazine are the efforts of students in grades 9-12. Staff membership is open to any dedicated CHSN student who is willing to commit himself.

Our Sincerest Gratitude. . .

to Mr. & Mrs. Vernon Bonhotal for all their advice, and 'round-the-clock availability.

to Mr. Swift & Cue 'n Curtain for kindly allowing us to run a concession stand at their performances.

to Mr. & Mrs. Michael Nickel for the use/abuse of their formerly tidy home, and the bountiful snacks.

to the custodians for their help and patience in putting together the concession stand.

to the English and Art Departments, without whom *Et Cetera* could never exist.

photograph by Pamela Lyons